

February 25, 2023

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Julia Beebe. I am a resident of New Haven, and part of the Cap the Rent CT campaign. I am testifying in support of a rent cap and SB 4, with improvements to better protect tenants in our state. Specifically, SB 4, would be stronger with the following changes:

- The rent cap should be lowered to 2.5%.
- It should cover apartments between tenants so landlords cannot force out tenants to increase the rent.
- It should expand protections against no-cause evictions.

As a renter, I have come to expect frequent rent increases and with them, the difficulty in imagining what “home” will look like more than a year or two in advance. I crave a strong connection to my community and meaningful relationships with my neighbors and yet, with minimal protections as a tenant, this becomes difficult. I know that moving - with its emotional ramifications and financial costs - is always a very real possibility. As a tenant, I have faced a rent increase *every time* I have lived in an apartment for more than a year, including in 2020, during the Covid pandemic. These rent increases were not tied to any improvements to my apartment. While landlords assert that a rent cap would forbid them from raising rents to reflect rising costs, renters are extended no such consideration. During the financial precarity of the pandemic, as fuel costs (that I as a tenant have paid) have increased dramatically (in one rental, my partner and I faced a shocking *\$780 monthly heat bill* despite keeping our apartment uncomfortably cold), and as salaries have remained the same, I have paid rent increases.

Furthermore, landlords often pass on the costs of building maintenance - the very costs for which they claim they must increase rent - to tenants. In one apartment, after discovering that my electricity bill was extremely high, I called my utility company and was told that that amount of usage must be related to something like a dehumidifier. My partner and I did not have a dehumidifier or air conditioning. We minimally used fans. With some investigation, we learned that our landlord was running a large dehumidifier 24/7 in the building’s basement and that this electricity use was being charged to our unit. We asked our landlord to turn off the equipment or to pay for its use. He opted to turn off the dehumidifier, lamenting that it was important to prevent moisture in the building’s foundation. As renters in our first lease with this landlord, did he really expect us to absorb the cost of maintaining the building’s foundation? In my current apartment, I also pay utilities. I was surprised to learn that the landlord requires tenants to pay a monthly service plan to ensure maintenance of the furnace. The brochure from the utility company actually states that the service plan protects *homeowners* from expensive repairs to heating equipment. Again, my landlord has passed along the costs of maintaining the building *he owns* to his tenants. As we shoulder the costs of maintaining landlords’ properties in various ways, we are also told that rent

increases - of any amount - are necessary to cover these very same costs. As tenants, we deserve to be able to anticipate predictable and manageable rent increases, and to stay in our homes and communities. If the state is adjudicating between the appeals of property owners to be allowed to extract maximum profits from tenants (over and above the regular costs of maintaining properties) and tenants' calls to be allowed a basic quality of life - living safely and sustainably in their homes - I strongly believe the latter should be the highest priority.

I strongly support a rent cap and SB 4, provided that it is updated to better protect tenants, including through a 2.5% rent cap, applicability to apartments between tenants, and an expansion of protections against no-cause evictions. In the past week, you have heard and read testimonies from hundreds of individuals in support of a 2.5% rent cap. I expect that we can count on you to take urgent action to provide housing stability to Connecticut residents.

Sincerely,

Julia Beebe

New Haven